

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN.

A SERMON

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Preached by Mr. HAZELTON,

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AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET,
CLERKENWELL,

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"But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick"—{Matthew. 9: 12}.

The connection in which our text stands commences at the ninth verse of the chapter. In that and the following verses we have a view of a very interesting group of persons. How large the company was we cannot say, but a considerable number of persons were gathered together, and their different characters and dispositions manifested themselves under the silent operations of the omnipotence of Christ. In the ninth verse we are informed that as Jesus passed forth He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, "Follow Me." In the first place, therefore, we have a very interesting character, viz., a new convert, a person that had just been born again, one that had recently been transformed by the quickening grace of God. Matthew was a publican, sitting at the receipt of custom when the Master passed

forth and saw him. "Where the word of a king is there is power and therefore where the word of God the Almighty is there is omnipotent power. What the thoughts and feelings of Matthew were immediately before he was called by grace we do not know; we may say, however, that he was a publican and a sinner, and a few moments before the Saviour made His appearance he had no idea whatever of a change of heart or a transformation of his mind, and none whatever that he would become a recipient of that holy and heavenly life which constitutes Christianity. The Master, however, passed by, and directed a mighty word to his heart, saying, "Follow Me and we are elsewhere informed that Matthew arose, left all, and followed Christ immediately. He did not, however, follow Him very far, for probably his house was somewhat near, and he invited the Lord Jesus into it, and it came to pass as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. I have said that we have here a very interesting group. In the first place we have this new convert; in the second place, we observe the apostles of Jesus Christ; thirdly, there were many publicans and sinners, some of whom, perhaps, were serious, others probably were more or less spiritual, while perhaps others mocked and sneered whilst they sat and listened to the Master. Then we behold, not only publicans and sinners, the newly saved Matthew; the apostles of Jesus Christ, but a considerable number of Pharisees, persons who were righteous in their own conceit, having no idea that they needed the sovereign mercy of God, persons who had quite sufficient moral excellency of their own to carry them safely through this world, calmly

through death, and triumphantly, as they believed, into the world to come. And, then, in addition to all these characters, we have before us the Lord of life and glory. Here, then, was a congregation, a mixed gathering; and when the Pharisees, whose hands were so clean, whose hearts were so pure, and whose character was so perfect, when they saw that the Master was particularly familiar with the publicans and sinners, they proceeded to find fault with Him, and said to His disciples, " Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners ?" But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

Now, I shall not divide my subject this morning as I sometimes divide my discourses, but gather up a few points which, I think, the words suggest to our minds, and mention them as I proceed.

We may notice, in the first place, the very apparent fact mentioned by our Lord, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Now, although I do not suppose that the Lord Jesus referred to Himself when He spoke of persons that were whole, yet it may do us no harm if we for a few minutes look at the character of this Great Physician. Our blessed Redeemer is the Physician of souls as well as of bodies, and we are informed again and again concerning Him, "in Him is no sin." A Physician who is himself diseased from head to foot may cure another diseased person. A medical man of great weakness and feebleness, and suffering from a fatal disease may cure hundreds and thousands of his fellow-creatures, but our Great Physician is whole, He is perfectly free from disease. We can communicate disease to one another, but we cannot

communicate our health. Our great and glorious Redeemer can do this. He cannot communicate sin, for He is perfectly free from it. He cannot, like Adam, communicate guilt and corruption, or a moral disease to others, for He is holy, but He can and does communicate spiritual health, and has been doing so ever since He was on the earth. And mark, my brethren, the health which He imparts is His own; for He is not producing a spiritual state of things in us different from His own. That life which He imparts is His own life, and that health which He communicates is His own health. If, brethren and sisters, we are Christians, we know something of this Great Physician; and if we are of the family of heaven, we have been made in some measure healthy. Our great and glorious Redeemer is seated on His throne, and showers and streams of Divine influence which create and promote holiness or health are perpetually falling or flowing from His person to diseased creatures; He is distributing blessings among the poor and needy, and this work He will continue to perform until the solemn end of time. Had our Lord been diseased Himself He could not have cured us. Had He been capable of becoming diseased He could not have become the Physician of souls. Had not the Redeemer been perfectly impeccable, or absolutely incapable of sinning, He could not have saved sinners from guilt, and therefore when He says, "The whole need not a physician," it is a most apparent, an obvious fact that He Himself needed no physician. There was nothing wrong in Him to correct. There was no disease in Christ to cure. There was no stain in His character to remove. There was no feebleness in His arm to

incapacitate Him for the great work of saving sinners. He was whole in all respects, body and soul; and both being united to Deity, our great Redeemer was absolutely whole. I shall not, however, tarry on that point. I thought an observation or two on the personal perfection of Jesus might be more or less welcome to my friends.

Let us, therefore, in the second place, think of heaven and contemplate the angels of God's power and glory. Well, they are all whole, and need no physician. They never required the interposition of the blood of Jesus between themselves and God. The intervention of the atoning Mediator they never needed. Although poets, who have great license, speak not only of the feathers of angels' wings, but also of angels' tears, yet I believe angels never wept. They are perfect strangers to sorrow, and they never knew a pain. They were created for pleasure, and pleasure filled them the moment they came out of their great Creator's hands, There can be no pain in heaven, and heaven is their home, There can be no sorrow in the immediate presence of God, and that is where they dwell. There can be no woe in beings that are absolutely free from sin and absolutely perfect, and that is their exalted state and condition. They know millions of diseased beings, but they know not what it is to suffer themselves. They see the disease of sin in its nature, operations, and consequences, but they have no woeful experience themselves, and therefore we sometimes sing—

*“Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming grace and dying love.”*

I would not be critical, because I do not think criticisms in the pulpit on

ordinary occasions are profitable, yet permit me to say that mercy is a stream that angels never tasted. They taste the river of love and of eternal grace, but mercy is for the miserable, and they were never miserable. The blood of the dear Redeemer flowed, and they saw it, and they see it flowing still; they see diseased sinners washed therein, but they are never washed in that flowing fountain themselves. The whole need not a physician. Christ, therefore, needed none, and the angels of God's power and glory need none.

Now come down to the garden of Eden, and behold another interesting object. These observations are doctrinal, I know, yet they are true and scriptural. Enter Eden, the garden which was made immediately by God and planted by the great Creator's hand. There was every kind of fruit that man required, and every form no doubt of floral beauty existed there. In the midst thereof was the tree of life, and there was also the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Two pure and happy beings were also there, who were whole, and not diseased, for God did not make man a sinner. God made angels, but the fallen ones made themselves devils, and "God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions." God is not the Author of sin, and He never can be. God cannot be the source of moral evil. That moral disease of which we are speaking is cured by God, but not created, caused, or originated by Him; and therefore Adam was physically, mentally, and morally whole. His body, I doubt not, was excellent, strong, vigorous, and beautiful, while it was untainted, untouched, and un-weakened by sin. His mind was all that the great Creator required it to be—all its essential faculties and powers were

healthy or whole. He was morally perfect, for He was made in the image of God Himself, who said, "Let us make man in our own likeness," and in the likeness of God made He him; therefore Adam was whole when he stood in his primeval innocence, and he needed no physician. Had spiritual healing, medicine and balm, been presented to him, he would have been ignorant of their uses, having no pains nor wounds, being perfectly free from evil. He was whole and needed no physician.

Now, let us come to what I consider to be the literal meaning of the text. Jesus needed no physician, angels need none, and Adam before he fell needed not the interposition of a saving Mediator. Pharisees, however, were present on that occasion, and they were whole in their own conceit, and in their own opinion they were full of holiness. We have the character of one of them drawn by Jesus Christ Himself. He is represented as a petitioner, and yet, although he professed to pray, there was not a single petition in his prayer. "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are; I do this, and that, and the other, and I especially thank Thee that I am not like that publican." Now, that Pharisee was whole, and wanted no mercy. There was a Physician prepared by God, but he, being free from disease in his own estimation, needed or wanted Him not. "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" But when Jesus heard that, he said, as it were, Where should the Physician go to but to the hospital? And whom should He visit but the diseased? These publicans and sinners are morally diseased, and I am the Physician; and, therefore, when He heard that, He said, "They that are whole need not a Physician,

but they that are sick." What a mercy it is to be conscious of our sickness!

Distinguish, my friends, between need and want. All need Christ, the Physician; all, however, do not want Him. Those who want the Saviour feel their need of Him. The Pharisees needed Him, but inasmuch as they were whole in their own conceit, they did not feel what they needed, and therefore we may say they did not want Him. They were independent of Christ, and His blood and His mercy they despised. To wear the robe of another was not to their taste, for they were well dressed, perfectly free from blot and fault, and all that was displeasing to God, and some of them thought that they had performed works of supererogation. They had not only enough of their own to take them to heaven, but somewhat more to please the great Lawgiver, God. Such persons, as a rule, the Saviour turned away from, and the despised publicans and sinners had His merciful attention and regard. Let me speak plainly and say, My dear hearer, you may be too good for God, but too bad they cannot be; you may be too rich, but too poor you cannot be. You may be too well or too strong, but— and let me go as far as to say—too thoroughly and offensively diseased you never can be. The dear Redeemer is making for Himself, as the great Physician, an everlasting name. The heavens of eternal glory are to be filled and peopled with healthy persons, all of whom were under the shadow and in the region of eternal death.

Having made these few remarks as to the general and apparent fact, let me notice in the next place that the text suggests Divine

anticipation and provision. We have a God who anticipates us and all our need, and the natural requirements of all His creatures, and therefore He is never nonplussed, and can never be surprised. Our Heavenly Father is always prepared for all that arises in time, and for all that occurs in connection with His government of the universe. Had there not been physical disease in this world, we should never have heard of medical science, and we should never have needed physicians. Disease first came into existence, and that gave rise to the healing art, and suggested the necessity of medical practitioners. Now we must reverse this order of things in the government of God. The Physician was appointed before the patient existed. The medicine was prepared before the sickness commenced. The balm preceded the wound; for the precious blood of Jesus is said to be the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. I believe these remarks will apply to all the offices and titles of our dear Lord. A person has a flock of sheep before he requires a shepherd, but our great and glorious God prepared or provided the Shepherd first, and then brought the flock into existence for him, or, rather, Christ brings the flock into existence for Himself. Our God anticipated and foresaw the fall and all its woeful, penal, terrible, and offensive consequences, and immediately after the crash, and the world had become a moral wreck, He came forth and said, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty, and I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David, My servant, with My holy oil have I anointed him. With him My hand shall be established so that when the world become universally diseased God was prepared with a Physician ; and when

sin spread terribly and offensively, God brought out the grand provisions of His grace in the form of a divine and spiritual remedy, as it is written in Scripture—in the form of healing, fragrant ointment. “Thy name is as ointment poured forth.” He revealed His anciently prepared balm. Hence, “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there not a Physician there?” Indeed, in Christ Himself God had deposited all that guilty millions could possibly require; for “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” Here is a healthy Physician for an unhealthy family, or a Saviour, who cures sinners, who are His patients, in a manner that is peculiar to Himself. Not to anticipate myself, however, for we shall come to that presently ; therefore let us notice here that this disease is a moral one. Had it been merely mental, a schoolmaster or teacher might have healed us. Had it been physical, then ordinary physicians or medical men might have healed us. But the disease is a moral one—it is spiritual ruin—beyond the reach of teachers, beyond the reach of medicine, beyond the reach of philosophy, but not beyond the reach of blood, nor beyond the reach of the hand, the skill, and the wisdom of Christ, the great Physician. And this disease is universal. I do not mean to say that it breaks out alike in all. Every minister must in faithfulness to the Bible declare that all are diseased, and that the disease is universally fatal and absolutely incurable to all save one person, who is the blessed Christ of God. Some diseases are offensive, as well as painful and fatal; and permit me just to remind you here that sin, that great moral disease, is unspeakably offensive to God. It is that abominable thing which His soul hateth, and the only thing in the world that He abhors;

this accursed evil, however, He loathes intensely and infinitely. He hates sin in all. It is offensive to His nature and perfections. I cannot explain the mystery, yet so it is, that whilst He hates the disease He loves the dying patient or the soul that is guilty and defiled. You have a dear child at home" or elsewhere suffering deeply, and you fear the disease will terminate fatally. You loathe the disease, but love the dear little sufferer; but you are quite helpless, being altogether unable to heal and cure the wasting beloved one. While, however, your God and Father hates the disease from which you are suffering, He has provided a Physician for you, and He comes and does what angels could not do; he separates guilt from the guilty, sin from the sinner, and death from the dying transgressor, and casts the sin, the disease, behind his back, and puts the sinner into His bosom. "I am the Lord that healeth thee? "By His stripes we are healed." Christian brethren, take another thought here. This Physician is making no experiments. I do not know whether medical gentlemen are present or not; if any should be here, perhaps they would not be offended if I ventured to say I have sometimes thought that medical men make experiments. I think that a great deal in connection with medical matters is but imperfectly understood. But our dear Lord makes no experiment, He never discovers like earthly physicians, that His medicine is a little too strong or too weak, and it must therefore be changed. No; our great Lord is divinely skilful and infallible. He is responsible for the health of all the family of God. I would not use the word "responsible" in connection with Jesus if the Holy Ghost in the Word had not authorized me so to do. The covenant engagements of

Jesus give rise, I think, to responsibility. He did as He pleased about engaging to heal us, but having pledged His word and name to cure us and to give us eternal life, He is bound to fulfill His word. God—whilst the patient is being treated—keeps His eye on the Physician, and resteth in His love ; for He knows there will be no failure under His saving, healing hands. He has never yet failed, though some of the worst cases imaginable, cases indescribably and inconceivably bad, have been beneath His care. The dying thief was healed. Manasseh was cured, saved, and glorified. Mary Magdalene was made quite whole, and is as healthy as Abel, and as Enoch, who on earth walked and talked with God. Oh, this Physician is responsible for the health and for the life of all His patients. This is peculiar to Jesus Christ, who said in the days of His flesh, "I will come and heal him." Having received a description of the case, an ordinary physician would of course have said, "I will come and see him, or I will come and prescribe for him, and do all I can for him," but no one ever thought of holding an ordinary physician responsible for the health and life of his patient.

All heaven hold your Lord responsible for your health, your holiness, and your perfection; they were guaranteed by the Saviour's solemn word when He became the Mediator of the covenant of eternal grace,

*"Infinite years before the day,
And heavens began to roll."*

And what of all this? Why, since God anticipated your disease and

made provision for your holiness, since heavenly balm, ointment, and antidotes were prepared for you, the healing is progressing according to the good pleasure of His will, and though half the professors of the day seem to be much alarmed, and fear lest God should not accomplish His purposes, I believe that our salvation is in good, because in Almighty hands; and therefore the Gospel affirms the fact that

*"His eternal thought moves on
His undisturbed affairs."*

Sometimes this Physician apparently defers His visit, I know not why, until the eleventh hour. I must not, however, say much on that point; but if He saves at the eleventh hour, depend upon it the salvation is perfect and complete. He can effect a cure in a few minutes as well as in a few hours. Our God brought all His wisdom to bear upon the great provision He made, and therefore our health and our heaven are sure. There is a better state of things than this. We are not yet quite well, if I may so speak, we are not quite healed, because sin is still in us. The Saviour, however, has engaged to present us before His glory without spot or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing. If He took us into heaven uncured, or imperfectly healed—and mark this—we should weep there, having sorrow and pain, but the Holy Ghost in the Revelation, anticipating everything of the kind, has been pleased to say, " There shall be no more pain, nor tears, nor curse, for the former things are passed away." We weep now, for we are occasionally in pain. Now we are burdened and distressed, but the sweet world to which we go is everlasting rest and

day. Wonderful, truly wonderful, is the fact that of all the millions there, all are healthy, and all are whole. This was partly illustrated perhaps when Israel came out of Egypt, one of the greatest miracles recorded in the Old Testament, and yet a most important part of that miracle is too much forgotten. Perhaps there were two or three millions of persons—we cannot say how many, but a very large number—left Egypt in one night, they passed through the Red Sea, and entered the wilderness, and it is recorded by the Holy Ghost that there was not a feeble one among them. Think of London, with its millions, and suppose it contained three millions only, and all healthy, not a single diseased one among them! The Lord said to the people I am the Lord that healeth thee, and will bring none of the diseases of Egypt upon thee. The God of holiness is the God of health, and when He speaks, disease obeys his voice. The Lord heals and helps His people, and though they limp and halt now, and sometimes reel and stagger, like drunken men, being at their wits' end, they shall be perfectly healthy on passing over the threshold of glory, and entering into the world of eternal happiness and rest. But let us proceed.

The text suggests to my mind, in the third place, the necessity for the Saviour's mediation. The whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick. Jesus is the Physician, and I have spoken of Him as such; and now we notice the mediation of our Lord. For illustration's sake, imagine a diseased guilty, filthy, ruined sinner coming into the presence of unmediated Deity, or, to use a phrase which you frequently hear, and which you use yourselves—into the presence of a God out of Christ. What would be the consequence to the sinner?

Torment. No blood, no mediation, no middle Person to stand between Deity and his guilty, filthy soul. Without Christ's mediation the sinner would want God to hide his face, to conceal His glories, or to permit him to leave His presence and the spot. All offensive and unclean, how tortured, how tormented he would be. No; there is one God and one Mediator between God and man. He ever liveth to make intercession—and mark the phraseology—he ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him. We come to Him, to Jesus, first, with all our sins and grief, and filthiness, and wants, and wounds. In due time we are stripped, stripped of all supposed excellency, beauty, and glory, and come to Him just as we are. Think of a sinner coming into the presence of God out of Christ in that state. His mouth would be closed in hopeless shame and confusion, and His soul would be tortured and tormented, for the presence of the holy God would be a hell to him. Bless God for the system of mediation and for the Mediator, Jesus, who stands between, and is the Physician of souls. He heals and sweetens, and perfumes our souls, and then presents His patients to His Father and their Father, who accepts and approves them in Christ, and for His sake; and the glorious Gospel we preach assures us that we are complete in Him.

I pity the person making a profession of religion who ignores the mediation of our Lord. I cannot go into God's presence without Him, and I bless the God of infinite grace and wisdom that Jesus is where I need His presence, and is all I require Him to be for my acceptance. He received us when we came, and in due time He told us that our sins, which were many, were all forgiven.

Let us pass on, and ask, in the next place, how He heals His people. What is His method of curing sinners. Well, Himself took our infirmities, which is another wonderful proceeding; He took our sickness, and bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Other physicians have never done that. Christ cures by taking the guilt of the sinner upon Himself, and by carrying it away into the land of forgetfulness. And what else? He cures by imparting Himself to the sinner in peculiar conditions and forms. He obeyed the law and made it honorable. And what becomes of His obedience, which is perfect and divine? He does not need it for Himself, angels want it not. He spent a saving life on earth and under the law, and the obedience He brought in is imputed to His patients, made their own, and by this we are healed. Then there were His wounds, and blood, and what use does He make of them? We have healing from His balm-giving wounds, and purity from His blood. Indeed the Physician was Himself bruised, when what was in Him flowed forth, and the bruised Physician is laid upon the bruised patient, and by His stripes we are healed. Oh, this is God-like. The Healer comes into vital contact with the patient, and He draws from the patient that which God hates, and communicates to him all that God requires and loves; and if this is not His method of healing sinners, I am out of the secret.

The importance of the health of God's people we infer from the magnitude of the provision made for them. The arrangements God has made, His deep contrivance, and the vast expense He has been at to obtain for them eternal health and life, all proclaim the great importance of their perfection. Every faculty of the soul is to be

healed and free from disease. The understanding is to be enlightened; the judgment is to be divinely corrected; the will is to be filled with grace and righteousness; the affections are to be separated from the world and sin, washed in blood and united to Jesus, and raised to heavenly things; the conscience is to be purged from dead works to serve the living God; and the memory, an essential part of the mind, which is now both a friend and an enemy, is to be sanctified. We often think of what we wish we could forget and what we would remember we cannot think of; and therefore the memory is, in a measure, diseased now. But the memory's operations in heaven will be perfect, complete, satisfactory, and pleasurable for ever and ever.. Health is important, else so wonderful a Physician had never been appointed. Our destination demands health. A world of holiness; and sin being a disease the slightest remains thereof would be a sore and a blot there. Our associations demand health. We are to associate with angels, and, what is more, with God Himself for ever and ever. Our employment requires health. Here I am indisposed frequently, and wish—and I tell you a secret, and may the Lord forgive me—I sometimes wish, when coming to chapel, that I had not to preach, for, feeling my incompetency and the emptiness of my mind, I occasionally, perhaps frequently, dread the pulpit, and wish I had been called to serve God in some other way. There will be no indisposition of that kind there. The song will be welcome, the worship will be sweet, and we shall never be indisposed in soul. Jesus is the Physician, and the cure He effects is perfect and complete.

Lastly, if Jesus thus heals, and the healing involves all this and infinitely more, what is the state of the healed sinner? Well, it is a spiritual one, and let me say he is better in some respects than he

was before. *Hence Watts beautifully sings—*

“He raised me from the depths of death,

The gates of gaping hell,

And made my standing more secure

Than ‘twas before I fell.”

Adam was healthy, but his health was moral. The believer is healthy, and his health is spiritual and gracious. Adam had a perfectly holy life, but that life was loseable. “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands.” The health mentioned in the Word in relation to Christ is not a return of the sinner when cured to his primitive condition; he does not go back to Eden, nor return to his original state. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, and he stands where Adam did not stand, and feels as Adam did not feel. He is a new creature, for Christ has healed him.

Then, as to the present position of these patients, I should say, and I say it without fear, that a person whom Christ has cured is among the best of persons on the earth. Why, if Christ has cured you, you are a better parent, a better child, a better servant, a better master, a better sailor, a better soldier, a better politician, and better in all respects; for Jesus improves all He touches as a Saviour, He improves and elevates and dignifies all He comes into connection with, and when diseased souls come into contact with this great

Physician, old things pass away, and all things become new. A celebrated preacher, as you are aware, used to say he would not give a straw, I think it was, for that man's religion whose cat and dog did not fare the better for it. Oh, Christ does cure effectually, and therefore if an uncured person, or an unregenerate person, is as such a good husband or wife, he or she is better still after grace has regenerated the soul. O may the Lord, the Holy Spirit, take the things of Jesus and show them to our minds, and realize to us the meaning of that quaint old saying of Quarles:

*"He lays a wound upon a wound,
And makes the wounded whole."*

A wounded Christ on a wounded heart heals the soul and prepares it for God. May God command His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.